

The Best of Sicily Tour - 12 days

12 days Private Tour of Sicily with vehicle and local English speaking driver escort, land package only, including experiences as cheese making, wine tastings, lunch at home and Etna Volcano off road route.



Location

Agrigento



Days

12



Duration

ND



Category



Season

All Year



Tour Type

TOUR OVERVIEW

Season: all year available on request

11 nights/12 days

Palermo (4) Agrigento (2) Syracuse (2) Taormina (2) Palermo (1 night)

Hotel Package: not included but available on request

Airline Tickets: not purchased by us

Land: Palermo airport - West Side

Leave: Palermo airport - West Side

Day 1 – Palermo airport > Town

Day 2 – Palermo Half Day Walking Tour

Day 3 – Palermo > Cefalù and Monreale > Palermo

Day 4 – Palermo > Erice, Olive Oil, SaltWayRoad and Marsala Saltpans > Palermo

Day 5 - Palermo > Selinunte > Agrigento

Day 6 – Agrigento and Sicilian Village Meal Experience > Agrigento

Day 7 – Agrigento > Ragusa Ibla and Modica > Syracuse

Day 8 – Syracuse Half Day Walking Tour

Day 9 – Syracuse > Cyclops Riviera, Winery and Etna North Side > Taormina

Day 10 –Taormina

Day 11 – Taormina > Piazza Armerina > Palermo

Day 12 – Palermo > Palermo airport

Featured Licensed Local Guide Recommended for the above tour

- Palermo | Already Included in the tour costs
- Monreale, to visit the Dome
- Selinunte, to visit the Archaeological Park
- Agrigento, to visit the Valley of the Temples
- Syracusa, half day walking tour | Already Included in the tour costs
- Taormina, half day to visit the Greek-Roman Theatre and Corvaja Palace
- Piazza Armerina, to visit the Roman Villa

The rates for the above services are available on request.

TOUR CODE: BEST12

TOUR ITINERARY



Day 1

Palermo Airport > Town

Private vehicle and Italian speaking chauffeur disposal: transfer in only

Welcome to the warm, beautiful and pleasant island of Sicily! Upon arrival at Palermo Airport please proceed through the Passport Control and collect your luggage inside the customs area. Then meet the driver showing a sign with your name and a short drive takes you to the town.



Day 2

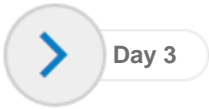
Palermo Half Day Walking Tour

English speaking guide disposal: half day from h 9AM

Today meet the local guide at hotel and start a lovely walking tour to explore Palermo. Our first stop is at the Palatine Chapel (Admission fee: not included), a finest example of Arab-Norman art in Palermo. Built by Roger II from 1130 to 1140, the chapel is adorned with extraordinary Norman-Byzantine mosaics. We then continue onto the Four Corners which is the junction in Palermo. Effectively, it is the centre point of the four areas of the old town centre. You will almost inevitably pass through it and it is worth stopping for five minutes to have a look at its sculptures which were commissioned by the Spanish Viceroy in 1611. The sculptures on each of the four corners depict a variety of themes, including the four seasons, four Spanish kings and the four patron saints of the old town areas. Going south-east down Via Maqueda you will come across Piazza Pretoria which is home not only to a splendid fountain but several other impressive buildings including, on the right, the City Hall. The fountain, known for generations as the "Fountain of Shame", has an interesting history. The large central fountain is the focal point for sixteen nude statues of nymphs, humans, mermaids and satyrs. If you imagine this being erected during the Inquisition, it is quite easy to imagine why it received its epithet, the "Fountain of Shame". The last but not the least is our stop at the Ballarò Open Air Market a place overflowing with beautiful fresh fish, and local

vegetables and cheeses. Originating from the era when Sicily was occupied by the moors, this 1000 year old market has run much in the same manner for centuries. It has strong Arab influences, resembling an eastern souk, and these influences are also evident in the merchandise itself. Next to mounds of ricotta and caciocavallo cheeses, barrels of olives and fat slabs of swordfish sit saffron and other spices, as well as sacks of beans and gorgeous indigenous fruits and local vegetables. Here you will have the opportunity to taste a typical palermitano dish, such as the famous Panelle (a thin paste of crushed ceci/garbanzo beans rolled into sheets, fried and served in pizza-like slices).

This afternoon is at leisure



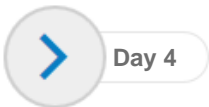
Palermo > Cefalù and Monreale > Palermo

Private vehicle and English speaking driver disposal: full day from h 9AM

Today meet the driver at hotel and in one hour driving we will join the lovely village of Cefalù. While Cefalù's origins go back to at least Greek times, the town we now know and love was built at the behest of the Norman King, Roger II. Construction of the Cathedral began in 1131 and is an exquisite example of what has been termed "Sicilian Romanesque". Thanks to the splendid mosaic of Christ Pantocrator above the altar, it is twinned with the Palatine Chapel in Palermo and the Dome in Monreale. Exploring the town we will join the Lavatory, which is fed by a natural spring and the Osterio Magno which, according to tradition was King Roger's very own residence.

This afternoon, on the way back to Palermo, we will stop in Monreale to see where Arab-Norman art and architecture reached its pinnacle in the Duomo (Tips: not included), launched in 1174 by William II. It represents scenes from the Old and New Testaments all in golden mosaics.

We then return to Palermo.



Palermo > Erice, lunch in an Olive Oil and Salt Way Road > Palermo

Private vehicle and English speaking driver disposal: full day from h 8.30AM

Today meet the driver at hotel and departure for Erice uptown, which was an important religious site associated with the goddess Venus. Wander through its ancient streets and visit some of the famous homemade pastry shops -- world-famous for marzipan candies and other delicacies like almond and pistachio pastries -- and the lovely preserved Mediaeval town offering the most breathtaking views and a palpable sense of history. Then by walk we join the most visited sites: the Pepoli Castle and Venus Castle. The former was built by the Arabs while the latter was a Norman construction with imposing towers that derived its name from the fact that it was built on the site of the ancient Temple of Venus, allegedly founded by Aeneas.

Later we travel in the country side and we soon arrive in an olive oil farmhouse for our delicious lunch

We then travel from Erice to Trapani-Marsala Salt Way Road, skirting the lagoon to see the snow-capped mountains but hills of salt, one of the Sicilian economy's historical resources that was already very precious in the days of the Phoenicians, who were the first to bring some form of technology to its production. The favourable climatic circumstances, such as high temperatures and a wind that increases evaporation, plus the shallowness of the water, contribute to create the evocative and unreal scenario created by the salt flats, which form a sort of immense chessboard that ranges in colour from off-green to pink. The tourist paths for visits to the salt flats wind their way around the great basins and, running along

the edges of the tanks of seawater - which glistens in the sun as it crystallizes - finally reach the mounds of salt. These mounds are topped by a series of recently restored windmills that recall the days when they were among the main instruments for pumping the water and grinding the salt. A panorama that has to be enjoyed, preferably at sunset, when everything becomes tinged with red. We then arrive at the salt pans Saline Ettore Infersa (Admission fee: non included) which offer a truly unique landscape. Windmills, first introduced during mediaeval times, dot the horizon, a testament to how things were once done, though one or two continue to function, pumping water through the sluice gates into or out of the various basins. Piles of harvested salt, neatly covered with terracotta tiles, lie between the road and the basins waiting to be despatched.



Day 5

Palermo > Selinunte > Agrigento

Private vehicle and English speaking driver disposal: full day from h 9AM

Today we drive to Selinunte (Admission fee: not included), the largest Archaeological Park in Europe, and the only lovely located, sitting on a high plain and overlooking the sea. It is flanked on either side by golden beaches and, being almost 1km wide, is an excellent excuse for a good walk, though it is also possible to get around.

This afternoon we then continue onto Agrigento.



Day 6

Agrigento and Sicilian Village Meal Experience

Private vehicle and English speaking driver disposal: full day from h 8.30AM

Today enjoy the finest of all ancient Greek sites—the complete Doric Temples (Admission fee: not included), one of Sicily's most famous historical attractions. This is one of the most outstanding examples of Greater Greece art and architecture, and is one of the main attractions of Sicily as well as a national monument of Italy.

Later we drive on a very charming route of inland villages off-the-beaten-track between hills and country landscapes. Upon arrival we meet a local guy who indulge us to taste just made ricotta cheese, homemade biscuits and the famous pane-cunsatu, a delicious bread stuffed with cheese, organic olive oil, salt, tomatoes and anchovies. Then starts our lunch in picnic style with locals and our amazing and unforgettable experience of true Sicily.



Day 7

Agrigento > Ragusa Ibla and Modica > Syracuse

Private vehicle and English speaking driver disposal: full day from h 8.30AM

Today meet the driver at hotel and drive to Ragusa Ibla, one of the most picturesque towns in Sicily. The view from the upper town over Ragusa Ibla on its own separate hilltop is quite breathtaking. One of the UNESCO-listed Baroque towns of south-eastern Sicily, Ragusa is also one of the principal filming locations for the Sicilian Detective Saga Il Commissario Montalbano (Montalbano Inspector), a series which has done wonders for publicising the beauty of this area.

This afternoon departure for Modica. Like the other towns in the Val di Noto, was badly damaged in the 1693 earthquake and largely rebuilt in Sicilian Baroque style. Modica is custodian of a 400 year tradition

of Sicilian chocolate-making. Being part of the Spanish kingdom for so many years meant that Sicily was often one of the first recipients of the new foodstuffs being brought back from South America. Cacao was one of these and today Modica still specialises in making granulous chocolate, often flavoured with chilli pepper, cinnamon or vanilla, that is based on Aztec methods and recipes. Chocolate shops abound and, for the real chocoholic, it is sometimes possible to watch the “chocolatiers” at work. Tasting of Modica chocolate is a must.

Later we continue onto Syracuse.



Day 8

Syracusa Half Day Walking Tour

Private taxi disposal: from Ortigia to the Archaeological Park and return

English speaking guide disposal: half day from h 9AM

Today meet the local guide at hotel and catch on a taxi to move to the Archaeological Park (Admission fee: not included), highlights of which are the Greek Theatre, the Roman Amphitheatre and the Paradise Quarry. Then back to Ortigia, the heart of the city center. This delightful pedestrian small island, connected with Syracuse by the Umberto Bridge, is home to the wonderful Cathedral built on the site of an ancient Temple of Athena as can clearly be seen from the original Doric columns that were incorporated into the building's main structure. Also on this square is the beautifully symmetrical Baroque Palazzo Beneventano and the church of Santa Lucia, the town's patron saint. Later to the colourful daily Street Market, which sells a fantastic array of fruit, vegetables, fish and meat.

This afternoon is at leisure



Day 9

Syracusa > Cyclops Riviera, Winery and Etna North Side > Taormina

Private vehicle and English speaking driver disposal: full day from h 8.30AM

Today meet the driver at hotel and drive to Cyclops Riviera, a 12-kilometer long stretch of the coast located north of the beautiful city of Catania that goes from Acireale to Aci Castello. This amazing coastline was named after some legends about the huge rocks sprouting from the sea, in fact, there are different legends about these boulders all involving Cyclops Polyphemus, the giant son of Poseidon and one of the Cyclopes. According to a legend, Polyphemus threw these boulders in the sea to express his rage against Ulysses, whose story has been told by Homer's Odyssey.

Later the Etna Volcano slopes to join a local winery where we will enjoy a delicious lunch and wine tastings.

Mount Etna is a mecca for gastronomes and wine enthusiasts. The towns and villages on the flanks of the mountain have numerous culinary specialities based on locally-grown or sourced ingredients. The northern and northeastern side of Etna is home to a flourishing wine area that has been called the New Bourgogne, for the excellent quality and characters of its wines, produced from both autochthonous grape varieties, such as Nerello Mascalese and Carricante.

We then continue onto Taormina, the world famous resort town of Sicily.



Day 10

Taormina at leisure

Today is at leisure for your independent walk in the Corso Umberto Street, the core of the town. From here you can join the Greek Theatre (Admission fee: not included), built for the most part of brick, and is therefore probably of Roman date, though the plan and arrangement are in accordance with those of Greek, rather than Roman, theatres; It is one of the world's most popular tourist attractions, so that Johann Wolfgang Goethe in his famous "Journey to Italy" wrote: "No theater audience has never had such a sight in front of him." The highlight of today walking tour is for sure go up using the old steps up to the top of the theatre to admire an amazing view of the Taormina Bay and the Etna volcano, the view from here is amazing and unforgettable.

The balance of the day is at leisure.



Day 11

Taormina > Piazza Armerina > Palermo

Private vehicle and English speaking driver disposal: full day from h 9AM

Today departure for Piazza Armerina, situated deep in the Sicilian hinterland, at 721 metres above sea level. Upon arrival we visit the Roman Villa (Admission fee: not included), built in the middle of the 4th Century AD as a hunting lodge by a Roman patrician. The Villa is home to some of the best preserved and extensive examples of Roman mosaics spread over around 3500mt and is one of the most luxurious of its kind. These extraordinarily vivid mosaics, probably produced by North African artisans, deal with numerous subjects, ranging from Homeric escapades and mythological scenes to portrayals of daily life, including the famous tableau of girls exercising in their "bikinis".

Later departure for Palermo.



Day 12

Palermo > Palermo airport

Private vehicle and Italian speaking chauffeur disposal: transfer out only

Today transfer to the airport.

TOUR MAP



WHAT IS INCLUDED?

- ✓ Airport transfers
- ✓ English speaking Driver
- ✓ Italian speaking Driver
- ✓ Licensed Local Guide as per program
- ✓ Meal as per Description
- ✓ Private vehicle as per itinerary
- ✓ The book Peoples of Sicily in complimentary (one for each room) with a special signature by the authors
- ✓ VAT

NOT INCLUDED

- ✗ Admission fees
- ✗ Beverage and meal not specified
- ✗ City taxes
- ✗ Fee for luggage handling fee at hotel
- ✗ Gratuities and tips
- ✗ Hotel accommodation
- ✗ Intercontinental/Local Flights
- ✗ Porterage at airport
- ✗ Travel Insurance